

## HIV has touched many lives. Many of us know someone affected by the disease.

Whether it's the one you are born into or the one you create, family matters.

Having the support of loved ones makes a big difference in the well-being of people living with HIV.



*"I didn't know a lot about HIV, so I needed to get educated."*

-Angie

People with HIV who have strong support networks are more likely to get and stay in care, which both improves health outcomes and reduces the spread of the disease. Fear of judgement and rejection can delay a person from seeking lifesaving treatment or even knowing their status.

Whether you are living with HIV or have a loved one who is, we all have an important role to play.



*"After he told us, I could see the relief. It was like a burden was being lifted off."*

-Kathy

**Find out more about HIV and supporting loved ones living with the disease.**

**1-800-533-4148**

[virginia.greaterthan.org](http://virginia.greaterthan.org)

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DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH

## Finding Out a Loved One Has HIV

When someone shares with you that they have HIV, it shows they trust you.

One of the best things you can do is listen without judgment and offer your love and support. Allow them to guide the conversation and share the level of detail that is comfortable for them.

If they are not already in medical care, encourage them to do so as soon as possible. You may offer to go with them to appointments. You can also have your questions answered.

Check in to see how they are feeling – both physically and emotionally. Let them know you are here to provide whatever help they may need.



*"My dad said 'we're a family and we're going to get through this.'"*

-Ana

### Some things to keep in mind if someone tells you they have HIV:

- HIV is not a death sentence. With ongoing treatment, people with HIV can live a normal, healthy lifespan.
- HIV is not spread through casual contact.
- It is possible to have healthy intimate relationships. There are more options than ever to prevent the spread of HIV and keep you both healthy.
- Keep it confidential. It is not your information to share and the consequences of doing so can be serious.
- Your support will help them be healthier.



*"I struggled for a long time. No one in my family knew. I wanted to tell them, but I was scared."*

-Victor

## Telling a Loved One You Have HIV

Choosing if and when to tell someone that you have HIV is a personal decision.

Having trusted friends and/or family who know your HIV status may help you manage your diagnosis. Ask for the support you need.



*"My Mom's a huge part of the reason I want to stay healthy."*

-Duston

### Having this conversation may bring up a range of emotions. Some things you may want to consider when sharing this information:

- What kind of relationship do you have with this person?
- What are the possible consequences of telling them you have HIV?
- Will telling them be a safe experience?
- What is that person's attitude and knowledge about HIV?
- Is there information about HIV you can share that may be helpful?
- Are there particular issues this person might have that will affect the support they can offer?

**HIV  
SHOULDN'T  
STAND  
IN THE WAY OF  
LOVE**

People with different HIV statuses can have healthy and safe intimate relationships. There are more options than ever to prevent the spread of HIV and keep both of you healthy.

**PrEP, short for pre-exposure prophylaxis,** is a once daily pill that when taken as prescribed has been found to be very effective in preventing HIV. PrEP doesn't protect against

other sexually transmitted diseases, so it is advised to continue to use condoms. For people with HIV, keeping up with treatment also significantly reduces the risk of passing the virus to sexual partners.

It is best to share your status with your partner before becoming intimate. In some states, it is a legal requirement.

While many people living with HIV have loving intimate relationships, for some, disclosure can lead to violence. To minimize risk, consider telling them in a public space with others around but private enough to talk. Or, have them talk with a health care provider to answer any questions they may have.

**Talk with your health care provider to find out more about PrEP and the role of treatment as prevention.**

## VIRGINIA AIDS

If you or a loved one finds out they have HIV, it's critical to get into care as soon as possible.

With ongoing treatment, a person with HIV can live a normal life span and have children without HIV. In addition to improving health, antiretrovirals (ARVs) – the medications used to treat HIV – also help prevent the spread of the disease.



*"We check in with him – did you take your meds? When's your next appointment?"*

*-Jose*

While there is no cure for HIV yet, ARVs work to reduce the amount of virus in the body. An undetectable viral load is when the amount of HIV in the blood is so low it can't be detected. The lower the viral load, the less likely it is to pass HIV to a sexual partner.

To get the full health and prevention benefits of ARVs, it is important that someone with HIV stay connected to care and continue to take their medications as prescribed even if they don't feel sick.

HIV testing is recommended as a part of routine health care, including prenatal care. If your health care provider does not bring it up, ask to be tested. They also can advise how often you should be tested.

### Knowledge is power.

- You cannot get HIV through sharing glasses or plates, food, holding hands, toilet seats, or other casual contact.
- HIV is also not spread through kissing, saliva, tears, or sweat.
- The most common way HIV is spread is through unprotected sex with someone with HIV who is not aware of their status or not on ARVs. HIV can also be transmitted by sharing needles.



Greater Than AIDS offers comprehensive, mobile-friendly resources with answers to more than 50 common questions, talking tips and a locator to find HIV testing and other services near you.

For more about HIV prevention, testing and treatment, visit:

[virginia.greaterthan.org](http://virginia.greaterthan.org)

You **Tube** /GreaterThanAIDS  
*watch. share. discuss!*

Find out more about HIV and supporting loved ones:

[virginia.greaterthan.org](http://virginia.greaterthan.org)

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# WE ARE FAMILY.

*Having the support of  
loved ones is lifesaving.*

